

1789

M I N U T E S

OF AN

A S S O C I A T I O N

For J. Buckland, Publisher-Rom; B. M. Little, Town-
Street; J. Marples, High Holborn; T. Scollick, City-
Road; and W. Baines, Westington-Capitall.

GENERAL BAPTISTS,

HELD AT

RET FORD, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE,

The 27th and 28th Days of May, 1789.

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MDCCLXXXIX.

2 E T U N I M

Lately Published,

By **D. TAYLOR,**

For *J. Buckland, Paternoster-Row; B. Ash, Little Tower-Street; J. Marsom, High Holborn; T. Scollick, City-Road: and W. Button, Newington-Causeway.*

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LETTER TO THE CHURCHES.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

WE once more venture to offer you a "word of exhortation," and hope you will accept it as a testimony of love, from those who have the care of your souls at heart; and earnestly desire your prosperity in the power of religion.

The present age is an age of shameful trifling in the things of God. The form of religion with too many appears to be the whole of it; and with great numbers, even the form itself is awfully neglected. On the other hand, pride, vanity, and conformity to this wicked world, are dreadfully prevalent in multitudes who call themselves Christians. Be not you of that number, brethren. "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind;" that ye may fully "prove" by happy experience, in your present peace and future glory, "what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." That you may be "filled with his fullness," in an eminent degree in this life, and enthroned near him to all eternity, in that blessed world, where he will certainly "reward every man according to his works."

We earnestly beseech you, brethren, frequently to examine yourselves, both as to the reality of your conversion, the regularity of your behaviour, and your growth and improvement in the divine life. Do not some of you take up with the name, notions, or appearance of religion? Remember that "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." "Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates."

If

If you be truly converted, you are "renewed in the spirit of your mind." You "delight in the law of God after the inward man." Is it so with you? Does God see that it is so? Do your consciences bear witness to it? Do your families and neighbours see the evidence of it? Let no one deceive himself. "A tree is known by its fruit." True religion is known and felt in the soul; and proved in the life. Is your conversation adapted to "honour the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things?" If you would *honour* Jesus, brethren, you must *imitate* him. Like him, you must be "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." Without a careful attention to your great pattern, your conversation will not be "as becometh the gospel of Christ." Do you "grow in grace?" Are your "last works more than the first?" Remember that every renewed instance of mercy calls for increasing gratitude and love to your heavenly Father. Every ordinance you enjoy is calculated to bring you better acquainted with God; and, if duly improved, will have this blessed effect. Your nearer approach to heaven ought to enliven your souls, and produce more of the spirit and temper of heaven in you. Every repeated opportunity of reading your Bibles ought to enlarge your knowledge, regulate your tempers and conduct, and increase your faith. It is therefore, on every account, your duty and your privilege to grow in grace; and though you are not able to make this advancement of yourselves, your heavenly Father is ready "to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him."

We exhort you, frequently to reflect on that ruined and miserable condition from which, if you are truly converted, God in his infinite mercy and compassion has graciously delivered you. It is undoubtedly owing, in a great measure, to inattention to this subject, that there is so little genuine humility, gratitude, and zeal, in the professors of the present age. It is for want of a deep conviction of the awful curse of God, which justly lies on every man in his carnal state; that poor *sinners* are so negligent concerning the great salvation which Jesus Christ has wrought out for them: and when *believers* forget what they once were, as filthy, condemned, helpless, and exposed to everlasting vengeance, they too naturally grow luke-warm and indifferent. We beseech you to think much of the horrible pit from which you are recovered by the grace of God; and
on

on every such reflection enquire, "what shall we render to the Lord for all his benefits?" We hope this will keep your souls humble, lively, and zealous for God.

Think much of Jesus Christ, and his amazing sufferings for your sins. The ruined condition of man as a sinner, and the atonement made for us by the sufferings of Christ as our surety, on whom all "our sins were laid," and who "bare them in his own body on the tree," are doctrines closely connected in the system of evangelical truth; and ought to be closely connected in the meditations of every believer. The benefit resulting from such meditations will be proved in the experience of those whose minds are thus seriously and diligently employed. The death of Christ for the sins of men, as the only foundation of hope, is not a mere speculation, brethren; but a certain fact of the highest consequence, of which we ought never to lose sight, if possible, for a moment. By reading the New Testament, you will easily see, that it is not only the very fundamental doctrine of Christianity, and the only ground of hope to a sinner; but it is the chief stimulus to every part of holiness, and, continually employed and improved for this purpose by the sacred writers.

Finally, under these impressions, brethren, see that you be "ready to every good work." Your time is passing away. Death draws near. Eternity is before you. Improve your time and capacities for God, and be assiduous to lay up treasure in heaven. It will soon appear, in a manner not to be disputed, that this is our only wisdom on earth. May you and we be eminent in this wisdom; and may we happily meet you all in that world, where sin and sorrow shall never be known through everlasting ages!

In behalf of the Association.

D. TAYLOR.

MINUTES, &c.

TUESDAY evening began business; appointed Brother Thompson, Chairman, Brother D. Taylor and Brother N. Pickering, Moderators, Brother W. Pickering and Brother Truman, Scribes—Called over the Churches, &c.

Met on Wednesday Morning at seven o'clock to go on with business.

At ten o'clock Brother D. Taylor preached from II. Pet. i. 16. to the end of the chapter. At three o'clock, Brother S. Deacon preached from I. Cor. xv. 22. former part. The third Sermon was preached at seven in the evening, from Isai. liii. 5, 6.

LIST

A LIST of CHURCHES.

	Number of Members.	Increase		Refused.
		Baptized	Removed	
1 Ashford, Derbyshire, - - - - -	20	5		
2 Barton, Leicestershire, - - - - -	157	18	1	
3 Birmingham - - - - -	65	3		2
4 Boston, Lincolnshire - - - - -	85	11	2	
5 Burnley, Lancashire - - - - -	34	4		2
6 Caldwell, Derbyshire - - - - -	41	4		
7 Castle Donnington, Leicestershire - - -	103	3	1	
8 Church-lane, Whitechapel, London - - -	224	18	1	1
9 Gamston and Retford, Nottinghamshire -	77	10	4	1
10 Gossberton, Lincolnshire - - - - -	18	1		1
11 Halifax, Yorkshire - - - - -	59	4	1	1
12 Harbury, Warwickshire - - - - -	6			
13 Hinckley, Leicestershire - - - - -	135	17	1	
14 Ilkington, Derbyshire - - - - -	97	19	1	3
15 Kegworth, Leicestershire - - - - -	125	6	1	
16 Killingholm, Lincolnshire - - - - -	41	3		2
17 Kirkby-Woodhouse, Nottinghamshire - -	42	13	1	
18 Kirton, Lincolnshire - - - - -	60	7		
19 Leak, Nottinghamshire - - - - -	160	9		
20 Leicester - - - - -	111	16		1
21 Longford, Warwickshire - - - - -	117			
22 Long Sutton, Lincolnshire - - - - -	30			
23 Longwood, Yorkshire - - - - -	19			
24 Loughborough, Leicestershire - - - - -	280	38	5	2
25 Maltby, Lincolnshire - - - - -	64			2
26 Melbourn, Derbyshire - - - - -	223	8	1	3
27 Nottingham - - - - -	151	22	10	
28 Queenshead, Yorkshire - - - - -	51			
29 Wadsworth, Yorkshire - - - - -	91			2
30 Wisbeach, Cambridgeshire - - - - -	21			
31 Yarmouth, Norfolk - - - - -	30			
		234	30	23
Number of Members last Year - - - - -	2792			
	2600			
Increase this Year - - - - -	192			

Decrease		Dead.	REPRESENTATIVES of the several Churches.		Ordinance Preachers.	Pastors.
Removed	Excluded.		Withdrawn	Removed		
	2	1		William Pickering and John Birley	1	
1	1	7		S. Deacon	2	
	1			A Letter	3	
2	3	4		William Thompson	1	
	2		2	Richard Foulds, Edmund Whitaker	1	2
	1			A Letter	1	
	2	4		N. Pickering	1	1
2	3	4	3	Dan Taylor	2	
1	2	1		Jonathan Scott, Joseph Jeffery, &c.	1	1
				Thomas Fant	1	1
	3	1		William Burgess	1	
1	1	1		William Smith	3	
1	6	1		John Goddard	1	
2	5	1		J. Tarratt	1	1
5	3	1		J. Hannath, J. Tyfon	1	
	4	1		T. Truman, J. Watfon, G. Allen, &c.	2	
		2		C. Fairweather		
3	3	5		R. Thurman, J. Bennet	1	1
1	2	1		J. Deacon	1	1
	3			A Letter	1	
					1	
4	10	5		B. Pollard	1	1
				Jer. Ingham	1	
2	6	6		F. Smith	1	1
2	7	3		R. Smith, T. Bennet	1	
	1	2	1	J. Taylor, J. Ellis, J. Balmforth	1	1
	1	3	3	J. Sutcliff	1	
	4	2		A Letter	1	1
27	76	9	5	6	23	23

STATE OF THE CHURCHES.

ASHFORD. Stated preaching at Ashford, Wardlow, and Bradwell. Pretty well attended with hearers, especially at Bradwell. Have reason to lament the want of more life and zeal among us. We have had some trials; but hope that Religion is likely to advance, if we are still favoured with a minister.

BARTON. The state of religion is too low; yet we bless God we are peaceable and united; and should be tolerably happy were it not for one particular affair which gives us some alarm.

BIRMINGHAM. Pretty much united and comfortable. Preaching three times a day, and once on the week days.

BOSTON. We are at peace among ourselves; but believe that a party, bigotted spirit, in this town, does much mischief to the cause of our dear and Blessed Redeemer.

BURNLEY. Our pastor has laboured at Longford about three months. We have preaching twice on the Lord's day, in our meeting-house, and generally once, in the evening, at another place in the neighbourhood, where we are well attended with hearers. We are exercised with trials, which, we fear, have too much divided our hearts from God. Yet we trust that many are lively and zealous for the cause of religion. We desire all the brethren to pray for us.

CALDWELL. We hope the power of religion is on the advance. Our beloved pastor has, for a considerable time, been nearly deprived of sight. We sincerely desire the prayers of our associated brethren in his behalf.

CASTLE-DONNINGTON. Our brother W. Pickering has been at Ashford ten or eleven months; but whether he will settle there is yet undetermined. Vital and practical christianity too much wanting in some. But others, we trust, come under a better description. Pretty well united.

CHURCH-LANE, WHITECHAPEL, LONDON. We have preaching three times on a Lord's day, and a lecture on Thursday evening. Our minister preaches (except once a month) every Monday evening at Poplar. We have a weekly prayer-meeting; a church-meeting once a month; and extra ones, as occasion requires. An exhortation

tation once a quarter, on the duties connected with Christian fellowship. We bless God we are quite unanimous; and trust that the work of the Lord is going forward amongst us.

GAMSTON and RETFORD. Ministers and meetings as last year; only we have preached once a month at North Clifton for some time past. We are unanimous; and religion seems to advance.

GOSBERTON. Preaching twice every Lord's day. A meeting for prayer and conversation, which was every Thursday evening in Winter, but is now on the Lord's day evening. We are unanimous. Our meetings better attended than formerly; especially when strangers visit us. Hope there are several young persons serious, who have not yet expressed a desire of joining in fellowship with us. Wish to see more zeal for the cause of our precious Redeemer.

HALIFAX. Brother Burgess still continues to labour amongst us; and, we trust, not without acceptance, the number of our hearers being considerably increased. Hope the power of religion rather prospers among us, though, it is to be feared, some are too indifferent. We desire to be thankful for unanimity.

HINCKLEY. Meetings nearly as last year, except preaching one Lord's day more in the month at Wolvey, and having our church meetings and Lord's Supper both on one day at Hinckley — Peaceable and unanimous; pretty well attended with hearers; and the cause, on the whole, seems to prosper.

ILKISTON. Our church is pretty well united; and our meetings well attended.

KEGWORTH. Pretty well attended with hearers in most places where we preach; but conversions few, and increase of members small. The church is peaceful and harmonious; but some are much wanting in love and zeal. Others more lively and active. Meetings the same as last year, except regular preaching at Belton once a fortnight.

KILLINGHOLM. We prove that this is a world of difficulty and danger. Through mercy we are, in general, unanimous and peaceable; though we have some members who are too much of the Laodicean spirit; of whose conversion we have some reason to doubt. One young minister

nister raised last year, of whose usefulness we have good hopes. Preaching once a fortnight at Ulceby. Clixby and Halton once a month. At Pevelly every Lord's day. At Killingholm well attended with hearers.

KIRKBY-WOODHOUSE. Have had considerable troubles this year, occasioned by the disorderly conduct of some members. Tolerably well united; but some want that life and zeal which are very desirable. Hope that religion is on the advance. Preaching three times on the Lord's day, and on the Wednesday evenings. Also a meeting on Saturday evenings, to exercise the gifts of young men. Tolerably attended with hearers. Officers as last year; only our ruling Elder is dead.

KIRTON. Pretty unanimous at present. We thank our Gamston friends for the favour of sending Brother Scott to preach among us, and beg the continuance of that favour.

LEAKE. Meetings as last year. Tolerably unanimous, and hope that religion is on the advance. Well attended with hearers.

LEICESTER. We fear the state of religion is not quite so good as in time past. Some not so lively as might be wished; though we trust that others continue zealous and steadfast. Public worship, in general, well attended; except the week-day evenings, and Lord's day mornings, which are too much neglected. Preaching in three or four neighbouring villages, and pretty well attended.

LONGFORD. The members appear, of late, more lively and zealous. Brother Foulds has been among us about ten weeks, whose labours have been blessed to many souls, and whom we expect to settle among us.

LOUGHBOROUGH. Preaching regularly at Loughborough, Quorndon, Mount-Sorrel, Rothby, and Woodhouse. Well attended with hearers; but not so united among ourselves as we could wish: yet hope we have many upright zealous souls among us; though some give cause to fear that they grow in lukewarmness and formality, rather than "in grace, and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

MALTBY. Our congregation at Maltby is pretty large; but at Alford we could wish to see our hearers more numerous. Some think there is a little revival of religion

religion among us. We have the prospect of a small addition to our present number of members.

MELBOURNE. Pretty well attended with hearers, especially at Melbourne. Yet the work of the Lord does not appear to prosper among us. We have had great trouble through some ungodly members, who have, we believe, done us great hurt.

NOTTINGHAM. Preaching at Nottingham twice on the Lord's day, and on Tuesday evenings. Church meetings once a fortnight on Lord's day evenings. Also weekly experience meetings at the houses of friends. Public preaching tolerably well attended with hearers, and hope the hearers rather increase. Tolerably peaceful and unanimous among ourselves; yet have reason to pray for more of the life and power of religion in our souls. Brother Smith has, for some months past, preached once a month at Crapwell, Allocton, and Thurgaton; places ten or twelve miles distant from us. But there has not yet appeared much fruit of his labours.

QUEENSHEAD. Some of the members walk as becomes the gospel of Christ. Others are very disorderly, and give much trouble. We have preaching twice, sometimes thrice on the Lord's day. Generally well attended with hearers.

WADSWORTH. Some seem too cold and indifferent; but others appear zealous for God. We have preaching and other meetings much as last year, only our minister has lately begun to preach once a month at Erringdon. Not so peaceable among ourselves as might be wished. Brethren pray for us.

WISBEACH. Preaching three times on a Lord's day, and a prayer meeting on Wednesday evenings. As well attended with hearers as usual; but not so lively and zealous as might be wished. We desire the prayers of the brethren in our behalf, and the visits of ministers as frequently as possible.

C A S E S.

CASE I. From Mr. Wrathall; desiring our advice with regard to the steps he shall take when he leaves his people, which must soon take place, on account of his having relinquished the Calvinistic sentiments.

We

We advise him to come to our next Quarterly Conference at Castle-Donnington, on the 23d of June, and to visit our churches as may then be thought proper.

CASE II. Brother D. Taylor has proposed to our consideration a plan for attempting to revive religion and the General Baptist interest, in some places where it was formerly flourishing, but is now decayed.

We advise that, when this plan is laid before the General Assembly, if they approve of it, Brother Taylor would get it printed, and send it to the several churches for their concurrence.

CASE III. The calamitous condition of Brother Charles Norton, Pastor of the church at Caldwell, who has nearly lost his sight, has been taken into consideration by this association. We advise him, and the church at Caldwell, to apply to the best physician they can, and to obtain all the assistance that can be procured. We hope our churches will be ready to assist in defraying the expences of such an application; and we agree to recommend his case to our respective churches.

CASE IV. The church at Burnley request the opinion and advice of this association respecting the removal of Brother Folds to Longford.

The circumstances of this case were very closely attended to; and the result was, that, considering the peculiar difficulties with which his stay at Burnley may be now attended, it is thought, by a majority of thirteen to six, (all the rest neuters) that it will be better for him to remove. But we think that the conduct of our Longford brethren in requesting his removal, and his conduct in acceding to their request, in so precipitate a manner, is very disorderly and unjustifiable.

CASE V. The church at Birmingham request that the Association will endeavour to direct them to a suitable minister.

We do not know of any minister suitable for them, who could with propriety, at present, be removed to them.

CASE VI. Would it be proper for the Protestant Dissenters at present to take any immediate steps in attempting to procure the liberty of marrying among themselves?

We think this liberty would be a considerable privilege, and a privilege which may reasonably be requested from

from the legislature. But as we cannot expect much attention to be paid to a petition of this kind in the present year; and as our business at this Association exceeds our time, we defer the further discussion of this question till the next Association.

CASE VII. The church at Ashford request the advice of this Association respecting the propriety of building a meeting-house at Bradwell.

Considering the present state of the churches, and the cases before them, we cannot advise them to begin to build for two or three years, unless they can bear the burthen themselves, or some individual will lay down the money for them, and engage not to demand it of them, till the churches find it convenient to take up their case, and make a general collection for them.

CASE VIII. The Brethren at Ilkinston have renewed their request for assistance in building a meeting-house at Smailey.

We think their case is the most important of any which are now before us. We advise them to address the churches by letter, and hope they will obtain the necessary assistance. Longwood, Killingholm, Widmorpool, and Loughborough, may be taken into consideration next year; till which time we advise them to exert themselves with spirit in raising a stock of money among themselves, towards accomplishing their designed objects.

CASE IX. Brethren Thompson and Fant, meeting with some opposition in preaching at Heckington, from persons of different sentiments, have desired the advice of this Association.

We advise these brethren to continue preaching at Heckington so long as the house is open for them, if they can make it convenient; and to preach there as often, and as peaceably as possible.

CASE X. The Church at St. Ives desires to be in connection with this Association.

We advise them to write to the Churches, as is usual on such occasions, that no obstacle may lie in the way of their being comfortably united with us.

CASE XI. As the young minister at Shore is dead this year, the Brethren there request our advice with regard to the supplying of that place.

We

We know of no minister at present, who can conveniently settle with them; and think the ministers and Churches in Yorkshire the best qualified to give them assistance.

CASE XII. From the last Quarterly Conference at Leicester, it is requested that this Association consider whether it be not proper to publish a new Collection of Hymns, for the use of those in this connection who may choose to make use of them.

This, by a great majority, is thought necessary, as the last Collection appears to be defective, and the last edition of three thousand five hundred copies is nearly sold off. It is requested that all our ministers would embrace any opportunity which occurs this year, to collect such Hymns as they approve for the purpose, and that any others who choose will give their assistance in it. But a committee of ministers are particularly appointed to keep this object in view, and to pursue it with attention; that such a Collection may be ready when the Churches shall request them to be published.

CASE XIII. In consequence of a circumstance which has happened the preceding year, with respect to which a case has been proposed at the present meeting, the representatives of the churches, which compose this Association, think it may be necessary to observe to the several churches they represent, that as it has hitherto been the regular custom to bring all cases, which may occasion expences, to the Association before they are sent to the churches, so we still think that this method is the best which can easily be adopted.

We think it must be, in some measure, evident to our Brethren, that though we acknowledge them very capable of judging respecting the importance of any case sent to them, and that they have an absolute right to refuse or grant assistance at their discretion, as well as to contribute to any case in that way and at that time which they think most proper; yet we apprehend they will grant that the general interest should be regarded in preference to any individual. Now the immediate importance of any case to the general interest, cannot, we presume, be so well known, but upon a comparison of it with other cases; which comparison cannot well be so fair

fair and open as at the annual Association, when every circumstance can be fully investigated. Consequently, when all these cases are brought before the Association, and carefully investigated by them, we flatter ourselves that we can better judge which is most important, and represent the importance of any of them more fully to our respective churches; and that, on this ground, it will appear that the original mode of presenting cases will have a more happy influence on the interest at large.— However, if any of the churches in connection judge differently, we wish them to signify it, and give us their reasons at the next Association.

CASE XIV. There are a few persons who wish to form a church of themselves at the distance of ten or twelve miles from any of our pastors; and desire one of our pastors to take the care of them, and administer the ordinances among them. Is it orderly and expedient for a pastor to take the over-right of such a people, besides caring for his own church?

We think that in some cases it may be expedient, if the church to which that minister belongs agrees to it.

CASE XV. Suppose a minister, by the advice of the Association, removes from his people to another church, which has invited him, and the people he leaves cannot be ^{pro}vided with another minister, without being at some expences, less or more; we wish the Association to consider whether it be according to the law of Christ, Gal. vi. 2, or according to the Apostle's reasoning, Rom. xv. 27, that, in addition to the peoples' loss of their minister, they should also be burthened with those expences which attend getting another.

We judge the passages referred to in the question do not make it the duty of the church to which such minister is removed to pay the whole expences which the church from which he is removed shall be at in procuring another. Yet we would always wish our churches, in cases of this nature, to consider the obligations of gratitude under which they may be laid, and to make suitable returns.

CASE XVI. Do the laws of this realm oblige Protestant Dissenters to serve the offices of Constable and Churchwarden?

Ans. Yes; either in person, or by proxy.

N. B.

N. B. *We wish to inform all our churches, that the Sermon on the Inspiration of Scripture, preached at this Association by Brother D. Taylor, was so satisfactory, that we have agreed to request that he would publish a Tract on the subject, containing the substance of his sermon, with such improvements as he shall think proper (Price One Shilling) And we desire the members of our respective churches to inform their ministers, or others, how many copies they choose to purchase, in order that he may know what number will be wanted. It is also requested that the churches would send in their orders as early as possible; at least, within a month after these minutes come to their hands.*

The next Association to be held at Castle-Donnington, Leicestershire, the Wednesday and Thursday in Easter Week, 1790.

The persons who attend may be accommodated at the Turk's Head.

Persons appointed to preach next year are,

J. TAYLOR	} in case of failure	W. THOMPSON.
G. BIRLEY		W. BURGESS.
D. TAYLOR		J. SCOTT.

